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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4433  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3046  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7583  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1649  
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON  
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SUBJECT: Arab Summit, Peace Process, Golan, Rice's Statements, Iraq  
(3/28)

¶1. Summary: The Syrian press on Mar. 28 reported President Asad's summit meeting with Saudi King Abdullah on Mar. 27 on the eve of the Arab summit in Riyadh. Talks dealt with bilateral relations, horizons for consolidating and boosting such relations, and topics on the agenda of the Arab Summit. Both leaders stressed their commitment to make the summit a success and to achieve security and stability in the region. They also reviewed the situation in the regional arena. President Asad also met on Mar. 27 with President Lahoud of Lebanon, King Hamad Ben Issa Al- Khalifa of Bahrain and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and an accompanying delegation. Talks

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focused on developments in the regional and international arenas, particularly Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories, the peace process, and the UN role in maintaining world peace and security.

Papers also reported that Arab League SecGen Amr Mousa stressed, in a statement to the Tunisian newspaper al-Chourouq published on Mar. 27, that "there will be no amendment to the Arab peace initiative approved by the Beirut summit, and that the Riyadh summit seeks to revive this plan." "The Arab initiative deals with the Israeli conflict as a whole because the initiative talks about the withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, whether the Palestinian, Syrian or the Lebanese lands," Mousa noted. He added that the Arab principles and bases are clear regarding withdrawal to the June 4th, 1967, line and negotiations on the Palestinian refugees and Jerusalem as part of the occupied land.

Papers also featured the Russian Foreign Ministry's annual report published on Mar. 27 reiterating the importance of taking a new and serious step to resume the peace process in the region on all tracks, including the Syrian track. The Russian Foreign Ministry's statement recommended efforts to revive negotiations on all peace tracks, to hold an international conference on the Middle East and to free the region of WMD. The report reiterated the importance of the Baker-Hamilton report on the situation in Iraq, the significance of setting a timetable for the pullout of foreign forces from Iraq and the need to open a dialogue with Syria and Iran to find a solution to the situation in Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Papers also reported that Syrian citizens in the occupied Golan

addressed a letter on Mar. 27 to UN SecGen Ban Ki-Moon reiterating their commitment to Syrian Arab identity, noting that laws issued by the Israeli occupation authority regarding the Golan, particularly the law of annexation, are null and void. They charged the Israeli occupation with stealing Golan water, transferring it to Israeli settlements, then selling it at high prices to Syrian citizens under occupation. They confirmed that Golan detainees and captives in Israeli prisons are exposed to political and moral oppression and denial of health care, which has led to the death of some of them.

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad and King Abdullah Ben Abdul-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia stress commitment to make the Arab Summit a success and to achieve security and stability in the region. President Asad holds talks in Riyadh with President Emile Lahoud of Lebanon, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and King Hamad Ben Issa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain. Saudi TV: President Asad is a dear guest in al-Riyadh" (3/27)

"President Emile Lahoud calls for supporting Lebanon's pan-Arab and national positions. Lahoud in Riyadh emphasizes rejection of settling Palestinian refugees and insists on the right of return for Palestinians" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 3/27)

"Russian Foreign Ministry underlines the necessity for taking a new and serious step to resume peace process in the region on all tracks, including the Syrian track" (Government-owned Tishreen, 3/27)

"US Secretary of State Rice calls on Arabs to be open with Israel, and rejects the final status negotiations. Olmert is angry. The Palestinian Authority finds nothing new in Rice's ideas. Washington diminishes its aid to the Palestinian Authority" (Government-owned

Al-Ba'th, 3/27)

"Citizens of occupied Golan reiterate commitment to their Syrian Arab identity" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 3/27)

"Killing of 5 US soldiers in Baghdad and al-Anbar. Scores of Iraqis killed in terrorist attacks in Ramadi and Tel Afar. Al-Dari [Chairman of Muslims Scholars Council]: All Iraqis reject US occupation" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 3/27)

"A blow to Bush: The Senate votes for scheduling pullout of US troops from Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 3/27)

## 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Summit of the Minimum: Damascus Awaits a  
Decisive Position on 5 Files; Two Others Will  
Remain Unresolved"

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Thana al-Imam, a commentator in independent al-Watan, commented (3/27): "Syrian political analysts believe Syria is viewing the summit with 'realism and rationalism'. While it does not pin much hope on the summit, especially with regard to bridging inter-Arab differences, it hopes the gathering will at least be 'the summit of the minimum,' adopting a unified position calling on Israel to comply with the Arab peace plan...."

Syria also hopes the Riyadh summit will clearly and explicitly reject the pressure that Syria is coming under and the attempt to isolate Damascus. According to leaked information, US Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration Ellen

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Sauerbrey did not meet with Syrian officials to discuss the pending regional issues during her recent visit to Damascus. She confined her visit to the declared objectives, namely, discussing the problem

of the Iraqi refugees in Syria. This indicates that the United States is proceeding with its policy to isolate Syria....

"The Arab summit will definitely call on Israel to resume peace negotiations and will support the Arab peace plan, especially since this plan is originally a Saudi plan. Many analysts stress that there is already a Saudi-American accord to back this plan as a kind of American support for the moderate Kingdom and to show that the world's only superpower is making efforts to revive the stalled peace talks, as Washington is somewhat embarrassed by the suspension of these talks....

"The Arab summit might also meet most of the other Syrian demands, though perhaps with a less emphatic tone than Damascus would like to see. But two files will remain unresolved: the Iranian uranium enrichment file and the Lebanese file...."

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"The Arab Peace Plan Will Be Amended"  
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Waddah Abd-Rabbuh, Chief Editor of independent Al-Watan, said (3/27): "We are not optimistic about the results that the Arab summit will produce because some Arab leaders will effectively push for amending the Arab peace plan, although they are saying they will not....

"The talk by some Arab leaders about the need for Arabs to take international developments into consideration when they present the plan and about the need to submit the plan to the UN Security Council means that the plan will be amended under international cover....

"The mission of the Security Council will be to amend the plan and give it an international cover so that no Arab country will be able

to object.... This is part of the American scheme, which seeks to bring the Arabs and Israelis to the negotiating table, where nothing will be achieved, so that the United States will have enough time to deal a painful military strike to Iran...."

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"Much Ado About Nothing"  
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Ghazi al-Dada, a commentator in government-owned Tishrin, wrote (3/27): "Condoleezza Rice can make as much as she wants of her misleading statements about Middle East peace.... It is hard to believe that these sugar-coated statements indicate a change in US positions, which are totally biased toward Israel....

"Palestinians and Arabs need more than courteous statements for media consumption.... What matters is action, not words....

"Up to this moment the United States, with its current administration, is the main contributor to the strict economic and political siege on Palestinians....

"We will see if the US Administration will deal positively and seriously with the Arab peace plan, which earned unexpected praise from Rice, and if it will do what it should do and apply sufficient pressure on Israel to force it to admit that Arabs have rights it must return based on international laws...."

Corbin